

4224 d 24  
REASONS

FOR RESIGNING THE

RECTORY OF PANTON

AND

VICARAGE OF SWINDERBY,

IN

LINCOLNSHIRE,

AND QUITTING THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

---

BY JOHN DISNEY, D.D. F.S.A.

---

THE SECOND EDITION.

---

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, N° 72, ST. PAUL'S  
CHURCH-YARD. 1783.

2 7 0 2 1 3 1

THE SECOND EDITION

RECTOR OF ST. MARTIN

AND

VICAR OF ST. MARTIN

IN

LONDON



CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN

BY JOHN DISNEY, D.D.

THE SECOND EDITION

PRINTED FOR A. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD

( 8 )  
R E A S O N S  
FOR QUITTING THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

**A** Public departure from my ministry in the established church, and withdrawing myself from all attendance on its worship, should seem not only to excuse, but to demand a declaration of the Reasons which have induced me to it, and made such a conduct necessary.

Several years have passed since a petition was offered to the consideration of Parliament, praying for relief in the matter of subscription to Articles of religious faith and doctrine. That petition had my entire concurrence. It maintained the only principle upon which any Protestant church, or society of Christians, can defend itself against the arguments urged in behalf of Popery; and pleaded strongly, in my opinion, for the removal of  
al

all those human inventions and additions to the Gospel of Jesus, which create the too general disbelief and rejection of it. The prayer of the petition, however, did not necessarily involve in it the truth or falsehood of any particular doctrines; neither did it ask the substitution of others, either in whole or in part, in the place of the present system. Nevertheless, I presume, there were very few, if any, in the number of the petitioners, who did not look forward to a review and amendment of the established forms of public worship.

The ground which the petitioners had chosen, was that impregnable rock, the sufficiency of the Scriptures to the purposes of edification and salvation, for all Christian Ministers, as well as others; and thence they grounded their plea, that no church, or society of Christians, had a right to require assent to human formularies of religious faith and doctrine, as the terms of communion, or admission to the Ministry, or otherwise.

The examination into the right of Protestant churches, in thus arrogating and exercising

exercising the claim of imposing explanatory Articles of religious faith, in addition to the Scriptures, necessarily brought on a more strict enquiry into the agreement, or non-agreement, of the particular doctrines contained in the formularies of the church of England with the word of God. The consequence of this further examination was productive of the clearest demonstration to many serious and liberal persons, that not a few of the doctrines of the established church were in no sort of agreement with the Christian Scriptures, whence they are presumed to be derived.

As far as this enquiry went to satisfy my understanding concerning these questions, I am free to own, that I was convinced that many doctrines received as true by the church of England, in her Articles and Liturgy, were not only in no agreement, but in direct contradiction to what appeared to me to be the word of God.

In this situation, I did not hesitate to determine never to accept any further preferment in the established church; because, I  
could

could not conscientiously, and without equivocation, declare my assent and consent to the thirty-nine Articles and Liturgy as by law is required. And this determination I have steadily adhered to, more than once, when offers were made me of preferments, in all other respects desirable and advantageous to my secular interests. For some years I did not apprehend that my convictions would carry me any further. In this supposition, however, I have been mistaken. And the same principle and reasons which have heretofore made me decline to repeat my subscription, have forced me to make a resignation of my benefices, and of all the advantages I had acquired upon such terms.

The public service of the Liturgy, or book of Common Prayer, holds out for its objects of religious worship three distinct Beings, there styled, *God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost* \* : *one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity* † : *not one only person, but three persons* ‡.

\* Litany. † Athanasian Creed.  
 ‡ Collect in Communion Service on Trinity Sunday.

These,

These, and the like expressions, together with repeated and continued addresses by prayer to Jesus Christ, and even to the Holy Spirit, instead of the one true God, who hath no equal, or sharer in the creation or government of the world, and who alone can hear the prayers of his creatures, are, according to my apprehension, in no way warranted by the word of God, as we read it in the Old and New Testament, the only authority upon which, as Christians and Protestants, we can depend. But on the contrary, they appear to be in direct opposition to the express declarations of that Being, who declared himself, by Moses, to be ONE LORD, (Deut. vi. 4.) and of Christ himself, whose words, borrowed also from Moses, are, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, him only shalt thou serve.* (Luke iv. 8.) And who, on all occasions, prayed to, and called upon the one God, the common father of all, who was *his father and our father, his God and our God.* (John xx. 17.) And who also declared that he *came not to do his own will, but the will of God who sent him;* (chap. vi. 38.) that he honoured his father, and sought not his own glory; that he wrought all his won-

derful works, not by his own power, but by the power of God; and further, who, in order to prevent misapprehensions of his proper character, renounced the bare appellation of *good*, given to him by the Scribe in the Gospel, saying, there was *none good but one*, and *that was God*. (Mark x. 18.)

Besides these particular, clear, and determinate authorities, my convictions of the divine Unity are not founded upon single and detached passages, but on the whole tenor of the sacred Scriptures, which speak one uniform and consistent language concerning it. *There is one God*, writes St. Paul, and *one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*; (1 Tim. ii. 5.) and all the declarations of Christ himself, and of all the writers of the New Testament, say the same thing.

It is indeed very true, and ought to be observed, that there are to be found expressions in the New Testament, which may seem, at first sight, and even to some liberal persons, to favour the considering Jesus Christ as an  
object

object of divine worship; and whereby some may be induced to look upon him to be really and properly God. But all the countenance and assistance which the expressions of Scripture alluded to give to such a doctrine, is derived either from the ambiguous use of the term *worship*, or from other alike doubtful phrases; or from the single instance of the proto-martyr Stephen; all which have been often demonstrated by learned enquirers, to yield little satisfaction for the introduction of such a new object of worship: and especially when it is considered, that Christ never taught or enjoined men to worship himself, but the Father only; nor ever gave any instruction to his disciples, to teach such a doctrine to the world as that of worshipping himself, their *Master* and *Lord*, as he declares himself to be to them; but not their *God*. (John xiii. 13.)

Under these convictions, the road of duty lay plain before me, hard as the measure might seem; worldly considerations alone remained to prevent me taking the direct path, and following the dictates of my conscience: And these temptations I had in no small de-

gree. The just claims of an infant family pleaded hard not to be neglected. Nor could I refrain from thinking upon their situation with all the anxiety of parental affection, and possibly, with more solicitude for their temporal provision, than the nature of my own difficulties ought to have admitted. I was agreeably situated in the circle of relations, and several esteemed friends, and have lived in a constant kind intercourse with all my parishioners, among whom I ever found my ministry acceptable. I had extended my usefulness among my neighbours in all the ways I was able. Nor was I forward to think that I could be equally useful under any change of situation which removed me to a different sphere of action. And I may add, that I was not insensible even to an acquired partiality to the place of my residence, where, on many accounts, and for reasons of a private nature, I could have wished to have continued, to the end of my life, in the enjoyment of every desirable accommodation and comfort which a reasonable mind could wish for.

These

These considerations deserved some thought, and they have had their full weight. But they are, after all, considerations of subordinate and inferior importance, when contrasted by the positive duty I owe to God, to the Gospel of Jesus, to my Fellow-Christians, and to myself.

It is no light matter to profess our religion in insincerity and hypocrisy. We are enjoined by high authority to worship God in spirit and in truth. And shall worldly temptations prevail upon any one, who seriously professes himself a Christian, to worship any other than the one true God, Jehovah, the Father of all, while he believes that same self-existent, and all-powerful Being to be God, and none other besides him? Or, shall we approach the great Searcher of hearts with that duplicity and deceit which is not to be allowed in our dealings and intercourse with our fellow men? Or, shall we think to amend the matter by addressing our *private* prayers to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in compromise for our having *publickly* prayed, in the language of the Church, to a Trinity of Gods, or to *the man*  
*Christ*

*Christ Jesus*, who lived among us, and died upon a cross, and who himself renounced all adoration and worship? Shall we pray unto a man, though the most holy and excellent that ever lived on the earth, and thereby elevate the Creature to the dignity of the Creator, and take, from the unchangeable and only God and Governor of the world, any of that praise and thanksgiving which we are enjoined to give unto him, and unto him only, and which are so peculiarly and eminently his own? Or, through our earnest desire to continue in the established Church, shall we prove our faith by mental reservations in the course of public worship, so that while we assent to one prayer, we reject another, or, possibly, divide a third, approving the former and rejecting the latter part? Or, rather, shall we not, in all true simplicity and singleness of heart, as St. Paul writes, *pray with the spirit and pray with the understanding also?* (1 Cor. xiv. 15.)

I am ready to own, that my compliance in the use of those things which I did not approve, was at one time relieved by the consideration, that such compliance was only  
official,

official, or ministerial. This argument, however, failed to afford satisfaction on further reflection upon the strict integrity and sincerity absolutely necessary for Divine worship.

I never did read, in the public service, the Creed, vulgarly called the Creed of Athanasius, considering it, to say the least, as entirely foreign to every good end of Christian edification. And it is now about ten years since I entirely omitted the Litany and Nicene Creed, without giving any offence to my congregation, confining the exercise of my Ministry in the morning service to my parish Church of Swinderby, and an adjoining one in the county of Nottingham; thinking, at that time, that by taking upon myself the penalties of the law, I thereby released myself from my engagement to conformity. This expedient of omitting some of the most offensive parts of the public Liturgy was afterwards superseded by considering my unconditional promise of conformity in a stronger point of view, than I had before held it.

But besides the force of this obligation, the remedy was in itself insufficient, because

the Trinitarian expressions and forms of worship, and express prayer to Jesus Christ, occur so frequently, and are so blended and united throughout the service, that there is no satisfactory relief to be had by partial omissions, without breaking in upon, and interrupting the regularity and order of the prayers, and consequently dispersing, or confounding the pious affections of many serious and devout persons. Therefore, after something more than two years I resumed the accustomed conformity to the ordinary parts of the public service.

From that time to the present I have continued to prosecute my enquiry, and have assiduously attended, in hopes of some satisfaction, to the many defences of the doctrine of a Trinity. The result has, however, been my entire conviction of the divine Unity in its utmost extent, and an increased sense of the importance of these great truths, *that GOD IS ONE, and HE ONLY to be worshipped.*

Under the accumulated influence of this fixed opinion, entertained after successive examina-

examinations, under many doubts, and much anxiety of mind, my continuing to minister under a form of religious worship, confessedly Trinitarian, or Tritheistic, became more seriously grievous. The earnest desire to worship the one God, and Father of all, in the simplicity of the Gospel Revelation, gained additional strength and power over my mind; and my continuance in a practice so repugnant to my convictions, was every day more and more unbearable.

It has been suggested on similar occasions, that to engage an assistant, whose opinions would lead him to a conscientious conformity in the services of the Church, would remove all personal difficulty. The expedient was no less insufficient to my relief than the former ones; for I should then have been neglectful of my duty in the place appointed me; and indirectly assenting, by the employment of another, to that which I did still disbelieve. And I must then have absented myself from all public worship of Almighty God, or have entirely forsaken the people of whom I had taken the charge. And this I should have done, for no better reason than because I

C

wished

wished to enjoy the emoluments of my preferment, while I scrupled to discharge the duties annexed to my situation; and should have set an example of the most disingenuous dealing, and of a neglect of the ordinances of God.

Thus, after the most deliberate consideration of all arguments, and after passing several painful years in much solicitude and apprehension of incurring the displeasure of Almighty God, I had but one choice to make, if ever I hoped for his approbation. I therefore, in obedience to the fullest convictions of my mind, have resigned my Ministry and preferments in the Church of England.

I should be much concerned, if any good man should so interpret this secession of mine from the worship of the Church established, as if I thereby, in the most remote degree, took upon me to blame, or condemn those who may continue their ministrations in it, even though their opinions on certain doctrines may nearly approach to my own.

I am sensible, from what has passed within myself, how differently similar convictions

tions operate in different states of the mind, and how very long a man may be prevailed upon to go on doing things in which he blames himself, from regards to a family, or to more distant kindred, and to various other local circumstances, which cannot easily be explained to others; and the still greater difficulty, at a certain time of life, of finding bread for a family any where else.

I am thankful now, I trust I shall always be so, whatever be the event as to this world, that I have been brought out of a situation, in which I went on from day to day condemning myself, and that it has pleased Divine Providence to lead me to a station, where I may still bear my testimony to the truth and holiness of the Gospel, and have the satisfaction of being united to a congregation of Christians, assembling at the chapel in Essex Street, London; where prayer is avowedly made to the only true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and where I shall still have more cause to be thankful, if my labours may be so far successful, that I may be an instrument of promoting his sole worship, and at the same time serve the great

and of the Gospel, in encouraging and exciting myself and others to piety and all virtue.

I have been led to say thus much concerning myself, in order to state the motives and reasons of my finally quitting, or departing from the established church; and to convince others, that such my withdrawing from it, is not the consequence of an hasty and undigested thought, but of much careful examination and serious reflection, and from an earnest desire to worship God, according to what I am now fully persuaded is agreeable to his own directions in the Scriptures. The difficulties and embarrassments of my mind have, for a long time, been well known to several of my more intimate and much esteemed friends. Nor have there been wanting some who, while they felt for all my uneasinesses, affectionately sympathized also with me in respect of the many particular circumstances which attended my situation, but which it is not necessary here to relate,

It may probably hence arise, that I may expose myself to some misconstruction and  
evil

evil report, as even persons the most unprejudiced in these matters, from the nature of the case, are unable to judge quite right, or decide for others. Nevertheless, I can safely say, that I take with me the most entire approbation of my own mind. And it is impossible so to regulate our conduct, as to satisfy the discordant and contradictory opinions of mankind. I have complied with the established forms of religious worship full as long as I could excuse myself therein; so that my continuance in the Church unto this time, and my present separation from it, should equally bespeak a patient hearing, and candid judgment from the firmest friend to the established doctrines. Whatever names of reproach may be given on the present, or on similar occasions, I am well satisfied that there is no *guilty heresy*, nothing wrong, in following the convictions of my own mind, after a full examination; and moreover, that there would have been great hypocrisy in continuing any longer to conform to a mode of worship quite contrary to my convictions.

It has ever been my desire and practice, in the course of my Ministry, to explain the  
great

great truths of Christianity, and thence to enforce and press upon my hearers the moral duties of the Gospel, and the indispensable necessity of a virtuous and holy life; to remind them, that to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, to fear God and keep his Commandments, to love our neighbour, and assist him by all kind offices, are among the things first needful, and of the greatest importance.

I make no doubt, but the time will come when the forms of worship in the Liturgy of the church of England will be corrected, and reduced nearer to the standard of Scripture. But, alas! this will not be the work of my day. This generation will probably pass away without seeing it. In the meantime, individuals must satisfy themselves in their compliance with the present system, according to their different apprehensions of the truth of it, or seek their relief by peaceable retirement from a church, with which they are not agreed in the object of religious worship. In either of these cases, there is no just occasion given for reproach. The concern is personal, and confined to the conscience

science of every individual, over which, neither the magistrate, nor any private persons, single or associated, have any authority.

To YOU, the parishioners of Swinderby, among whom I have lived in entire harmony, and to whom my labours in the Ministry have been chiefly devoted, to you, I would say in particular, that I leave you, my honest affectionate neighbours, with regret; but sincerity towards God requires it, and this you will always think right, and to be followed. May you remember, and improve by my late constant endeavours to instruct you according to the revealed will of God! I hope you will continue to go forward in the knowledge and obedience of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, framing your lives and conversation by it, as I also will strive to do; so shall we secure a meeting again in the future everlasting kingdom of God, the Father of all the families of the earth: To whom be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

*Lately published, by the same Author.*

I. **T**HE Birth, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, considered in Four Sermons. 8vo. 1s. 6d.

II. The Beauty of Holiness. A Sermon preached in the Parish Church of Swinderby, on Sunday, April 18, 1773; being the first Day of opening the Church after new Seating it, by the Voluntary Subscription of some of the Freeholders and others. 8vo. 6d.

III. The Rational Christian's Assistant to the worthy receiving the Lord's Supper. The second Edition. 12mo. Price 4d. or 3s. 6d. per Dozen.

IV. Remarks on Dr. Balguy's Sermon, preached in Lambeth Chapel, at the Consecration of the Bishops of Litchfield and Coventry and of Bangor, February 12, 1775; in a Letter to that Gentleman. 8vo. 1s.

V. A short View of the Controversies occasioned by the Confessional and the Petition to Parliament for Relief in the Matter of Subscription to the Liturgy, &c. The second Edition. 8vo. Price 1s. 6d.

VI. Remarks on Bishop Hurd's Charge, delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Litchfield and Coventry, at the Bishop's primary Visitation in 1775, and 1776, and printed at their Request. In a Letter to his Lordship. 8vo. Price 1s.

VII. A Sermon, preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalen, in the Bail of Lincoln, at the Visitation of the Archdeacon of Lincoln, on Wednesday, May 28, 1777. 4to. Price 1s.

VIII. A Spirit of Industry, recommended in a Sermon preached in the Parish Church of Swinderby, on Sunday, February 18, 1781. 12mo. Price 2d.

IX. A Sermon preached in the Parish Church of Swinderby, on Friday, February 8, 1782; being the Day appointed by his Majesty's Proclamation for a General Fast. 8vo. Price 6d.

12 MR 58

ALSO,

X. Thoughts on the great Circumspection necessary in Licensing Public Ale-houses. Submitted to the Consideration of the Gentlemen acting in the Commission of the Peace throughout England. By a Justice of Peace. 8vo. Price 6d.

